

# Independent Midterm Evaluation of A Better Future for Mali's Children: Combating Child Trafficking Through Education

CARE Mali

Cooperative Agreement Number: E-9-K-3-0063



2006

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DEPARTMENT OF LABOR**

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND TERMS

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AE	<i>Académie d'Enseignement</i> —second tier local education authority
APAF	<i>Appui à la Promotion des Aides Familiales</i> —National NGO CAF Functional Literacy Center
CAP	<i>Centre d'Animation Pédagogique</i> —first tier local education authority
CED	Centers for Education and Development
CDV	Village Centers for Development
CNRENF	<i>Centre National des Ressources pour l'Education Non Formelle</i> (National Resource Center for nonformal Education)
CP	<i>Conseiller Pédagogique</i> —Local education authority officer
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DEGE	Development Education for Girls' Empowerment
EI	Child Labor Education Initiative
FDS	<i>Fondation Pour le Développement Au Sahel</i> —National NGO
GAAS-Mali	<i>Groupe d'Animation Action au Sahel-Mali</i> —National NGO
GAP	<i>Groupe d'Appui au Progrès</i> —National Research Organization
GIE	<i>Groupe d'Intérêt Economique</i> —small group enterprise
ICLP	International Child Labor Program
ILAB	Bureau of International Labor Affairs
ILO-IPEC	International Labour Organization International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MJT	<i>Musow ka Jigiya Ton</i> or Women's Hope Collective—Women's Savings and credit groups
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
PAIB	<i>Programme d'Appui aux Initiatives de Base</i> —World-Bank-financed assistance for local initiatives
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USDOL	United States Department of Labor

Yellow Card “*Carte Jaune*” Official Malian document giving parental authorization for a child to cross national frontier

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In 2003, CARE signed a four-year cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) to implement the project entitled *A Better Future for Mali's Children: Combating Child Trafficking through Education*. The project aims to reduce child migration and trafficking from the regions of Mopti and Ségou by improving the access and quality of formal and nonformal education. The project also operates in Bamako to improve the education of migrant girls working as domestic servants. CARE and its partner World Vision manage the project using a range of strategies designed to achieve the following four goals:

1. To raise awareness of the importance of education for all children and mobilize a wide array of actors to improve and expand education infrastructures
2. To strengthen formal and transitional education systems that encourage working children and those at risk of working to attend school
3. To strengthen national institutions and policies on education and child labor
4. To ensure the long-term sustainability of these efforts.

The project has developed two principal areas of awareness-raising activities. The first focuses on training local leaders and community organizations, while the second encourages young people to become active participants in changing ideas and behavior concerning child migration. In addition to developing modules concerning child trafficking, migration, and labor issues, the project strengthens education through teacher training for both the formal and nonformal sectors. The project supports the implementation of existing government education and anti-child-trafficking policies and collaborates with government ministries at national and regional levels. Civil society organizations and decentralized local governments are strengthened through subcontracting with three national nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that implement project activities with community organizations and local authorities at the commune and village level. Women's savings and credit groups mobilize local savings to support children's schooling and improve the family's economic situation, thus contributing to the sustainability of changes resulting from project initiatives.

The midterm evaluation looked at the impact of the project in relation to its objectives, with the aim of ensuring that children's needs are being met through current interventions and that the remaining period of the project is utilized to maximum effect.

The evaluation found that project activities have been extremely successful in raising the awareness of communities in the intervention zones concerning the dangers associated with child migration and the importance of education. This has resulted in a significant increase in the number of children wanting to enroll in education to the extent that demand now exceeds supply in many project villages. There is a tendency for fewer young people to migrate to look for work in urban areas, but the economic pressures on these poor communities mean that migration is still a local reality.

The formal education system is currently inadequate to meet demand in terms of classrooms, trained teachers, books, materials, and equipment. While the project has contributed to improving quality in a number of schools, the magnitude of the challenge is such that it is beyond the scope of a single project. Mali is in the process of national education reform. The policy is in place and moving forward in the attempt to achieve a formal education system providing Education For All, but it will be some time before this fragile process can hope to achieve its aim. This is one of the reasons why the development of nonformal education is particularly important. The evaluation found that nonformal education opportunities in the project zones are largely inadequate to prevent the most vulnerable group of children from migrating. These are the children who have dropped out of school or who never attended and who have now passed the age when they can enroll. If they do not find a viable alternative, they are likely to go to the towns in search of work in spite of being aware of the inherent dangers.

The project has successfully mobilized a range of community organizations and local authorities in the fight against child migration, trafficking, and labor. They are aware of the risks that their children run when they leave their villages, and they are conscious of the importance of education for a successful future. They are doing what they can to develop community-sponsored opportunities but resources are limited. CARE has been able to attract funding to build two new nonformal education centers, which will greatly enhance the situation in two communes, but this still leaves many villages without provision. If the project achievements are to have a lasting impact and capitalize on changes in awareness and behavior, the most important aspect of the remaining period is the development of nonformal education opportunities for children from every project village.

The principal recommendation resulting from this evaluation is the development of strategies to support community proposed and managed income-generating and nonformal education opportunities. The income-generating aspect is important to counteract young people's need to migrate and can be creatively combined with literacy and basic education. Such activities need to be managed by young people themselves with support from community resource people. The role of the project in the time that remains is to facilitate this process and ensure that support systems are in place. The project has been successful in involving and engaging local actors, which is its principal strategy for sustainability. Even greater emphasis should be placed on local responsibility for management and decisionmaking linked to project-sponsored activities during the remainder of the project term to consolidate what has been achieved. The provision of seed funding and technical support to help local initiatives get off the ground would, should it prove possible, go a long way toward ensuring that young people in the project zones continued to benefit from project interventions after the end of the project.

This report describes in detail the midterm evaluation of the project conducted during January-February 2006. The report was prepared by Macro International Inc., according to guidelines prescribed by the USDOL International Child Labor Program (ICLP). The evaluation was conducted and documented by Sue Upton, an independent development consultant, assisted by GAP, a Malian research resource, in collaboration with USDOL/ICLP staff, members of the project team, and stakeholders in Mali.

# I      **CONTEXT**

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The U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) funds international labor projects through its Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB), one part of which is the International Child Labor Program (ICLP). In 2001, ICLP began funding the Child Labor Education Initiative (EI), which seeks to improve the access and quality of basic education for children who either have been involved in the worst forms of child labor or are at risk of becoming involved. EI has the following four main goals:

1. To raise awareness of the importance of education for all children and mobilize a wide array of actors to improve and expand education infrastructures
2. To strengthen formal and transitional education systems that encourage working children and those at risk of working to attend school
3. To strengthen national institutions and policies on education and child labor
4. To ensure the long-term sustainability of these efforts.

Migration has been a part of Mali's social fabric for centuries. It has been a survival strategy for households in rural areas in the Sahel zone, which is subject to cyclical drought and crop failure. Until about 20 years ago, migration was mostly seasonal and involved almost exclusively men. However, recent crises have resulted in a greater migration rate, with a growing number of children leaving their villages, including girls with few skills and little or no education. This expanded migration has led to exploitive child labor and prime conditions for child trafficking. The Malian government has undertaken both legal and political measures to counteract this situation, including signing agreements to combat child trafficking with the governments of other countries in the region. The economic downturn and political unrest in Côte d'Ivoire have gone some way to reducing this traffic, but children still end up in neighboring countries and beyond.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that 51.1 percent of Malian children between the ages of 10 and 14 were working in the year 2000.<sup>1</sup> Many, especially boys, work in agriculture, with many others, mostly girls, laboring as domestic servants. Ninety percent of domestic employees come from the rural areas and thousands of girls migrate to serve as domestic labor, principally to Bamako, the capital. Girls often leave home secretly or in complicity with their mothers, with the purpose of accumulating enough money to buy materials for their bridal trousseau.

Child workers face abusive and dangerous conditions in Bamako. Wages are extremely low and may be withheld, paid to a family member, or paid in kind with food and lodging. Children are often beaten, raped, and accused of theft. They work long hours, seven days a week, and perform household tasks beyond their physical capacity. Most are illiterate, having never been to school, and are ignorant of basic reproductive health information. These factors, combined with economic dependence, expose them to the risk of sexual exploitation.

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<sup>1</sup> USDOL/ILAB May 13, 2003 RFA on Child Labor, p 12.

School attendance in Mali is compulsory until the end of the ninth grade (usually age 14), but the 1998 census shows only 29 percent of children age 7 to 12 in school. This is improving with efforts to achieve Education For All, but in spite of fairly progressive education policies, Mali's education system is ill equipped to meet the challenge. Sufficient classrooms, desks, trained teachers, textbooks, and other teaching and learning materials are all lacking, and quality leaves much to be desired.

In October 2003, in the hope of improving the situation, CARE USA signed a four-year cooperative agreement with USDOL to implement the EI project entitled "A Better Future for Mali's Children: Combating Child Trafficking through Education" in two regions of Mali and the district of Bamako.

## II PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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The project aims to reduce child trafficking and migration for the purposes of exploitive work by improving access to and the quality of formal and nonformal education in 68 villages in the Region of Mopti, 60 villages in the Region of Ségou, and in two communes in Bamako. Implementing agencies work specifically with children age 8 to 18, parents, local education and administrative authorities, civil society organizations (CSOs), communities, and government. CARE and their partner World Vision manage the project using a range of strategies and approaches, with four major outputs designed to achieve the EI goals.

### ***Output 1: Awareness Raising: Communities are informed and sensitized to take actions against child trafficking and exploitive child labor and to promote education***

The project encourages children and young people to see themselves as leaders capable of making things happen, as opposed to having things happen to them. It gives children and youth a role in reducing child trafficking and exploitive labor through their participation in youth leadership camps and exchange visits that highlight the importance of education and the dangers of child trafficking and labor, and discuss the concepts of children's rights and responsibilities.

Current curriculum reform in Mali centers on enabling children to develop life skills and competencies that will serve them in the real world. The project has developed and introduced modules focusing on the issue of child migration, trafficking, and exploitive labor to complement the children's rights components that are already part of the core curriculum.

Representatives of School Management Committees, Parents Associations, Village Watch groups (*Comités de Surveillance Villageois*), Home Town Associations, and local leaders receive training to raise awareness of the issues and to develop and implement strategies to prevent child migration, trafficking, and labor. The project facilitates the creation of action plans by local organizations, which are then incorporated into the official development plan for the commune.

Radio spots, billboards, and sporting activities contribute to raising awareness in the project zones. Door-to-door canvassing takes place to encourage parents to enroll their children in school and to identify school-age children in each community.

### ***Output 2: Strengthening the quality of education: Educational activities of formal and nonformal structures offer appropriate training for children at risk and victims of child trafficking and exploitive labor***

Teacher trainers from the local education authorities have been introduced to the use of the "Integrated Task" (a teaching tool being promoted by the new curriculum) and to teaching materials concerning child trafficking and child labor issues, enabling them to train teaching staff from both formal and nonformal educational establishments.

The project has increased the number of formal schools implementing the curriculum reforms that were introduced on a national basis in October 2005. Year-one teachers and head teachers from an additional 39 schools in the project zone have been trained and provided with materials

to enable them to teach the new curriculum, which is based on mother tongue teaching, life skills competencies, and active learner-centered teaching methods.

Teachers in nonformal education structures have also been trained in participatory teaching methods and to teach modules concerning child trafficking/migration/labor and children's rights issues. Nonformal education structures include the following:

- Centers for Education and Development (CEDs): Government centers for those who have passed the age of enrollment in formal education, and which offer four years of literacy and basic education followed by two years practical skills training
- Village Centers for Development (CDVs): Community initiatives in the Region of Ségou that are an adaptation of functional literacy centers for adults
- Functional Literacy Center (CAFs): Centers run by *Appui à la Promotion des Aides Familiales* (APAF) offering basic education for girls working in Bamako, teaching life skills and children's rights in addition to literacy and mathematics.

***Output 3: Strengthening national institutions and policy: Key actors (communes, civil society, private sector, and government) collaborate to fight against child trafficking and exploitive labor***

The project implements its advocacy-based approach on the premise that all the policies and laws necessary to safeguard children's rights and guarantee quality basic education for all in Mali are already in place. It is law enforcement and policy implementation that are lacking, which require effective advocacy to obtain the necessary human and financial resources.

The project reinforces national education policy through its support for the new curriculum. At the national level it works with the Ministry for Women, Children and the Family to support and encourage policy implementation around issues of child migration, trafficking, and labor including the following:

- Publicity about the "Yellow Card," which authorizes children to cross national frontiers. The "Yellow Card" or "*Carte Jaune*" is popular parlance for the "*Titre de Voyage*," a document introduced by the Malian government in 2001 to help protect children from exploitation. Any child (age 0–18 years) who does not have a passport is legally required to show this document to leave the country. The procedure requires that authorities issue the card following parental request.
- Translation of relevant legal texts and Mali signatory documents into national languages, and their distribution in target areas.
- Participation in regular meetings between the Ministry and other financial and technical partners to coordinate activities and share information.

The current decentralization process in Mali provides a framework for the democratic development of local policy. The project contributes to this process by increasing local



awareness of the impact of child migration, trafficking, and labor so that commune authorities are encouraged to act to protect children and develop opportunities for education.

CARE and World Vision subcontract with three national NGOs to implement project activities in the three intervention zones: *Groupe d'Animation Action au Sahel* (GAAS)-Mali in Mopti, *Fondation Pour le Développement Au Sahel* (FDS) in Ségou, and *APAF-Muso Danbe* in Bamako. These organizations are based in their respective areas and will continue to work there after the end of the project. They in turn work to strengthen civil society organizations that have grown out of local communities—

- Hometown Associations of people from the regions of Ségou and Mopti who are living in Bamako
- Village Watch groups (*Comités de Surveillance Villageois*) set up to prevent child migration and trafficking
- School Management Committees and Parents Associations
- Women's savings and credit groups

***Output 4: Ensuring sustainability: Resource Leveraging—Families of children attending formal and nonformal education act on economic opportunities***

In addition to strategies for sustainability inherent under the previous three outputs, the project has facilitated the setting up of 93 credit and savings groups known as MJT or Women's Hope Collectives in 63 villages in the regions of Mopti and Ségou. The groups enable women to organize themselves to save regularly and take loans to finance income-generating activities. The interest on repayments creates a growing fund that finances not only loans but also unforeseen needs such as health emergencies. Profits help women to support their children's schooling and meet other family needs. MJT business meetings are paired with training sessions that provide skills and raise awareness about significant issues in the women's lives.

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### III EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

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The evaluation looks at the project as a whole and its overall impact in relation to its stated objectives. The Terms of Reference (TOR) are included in this report as Annex C. The activities carried out during the first 27 months of the Cooperative Agreement are reviewed and assessed with regard to their relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. The evaluation aims to—

- Help individual organizations identify areas of good performance and areas where project implementation can be improved
- Assist ICLP to learn more about what is or is not working in terms of the overall conceptualization and design of EI projects within the broad ICLP technical cooperation program framework
- Assess the degree to which objectives relevant to the country-specific situation they address have been achieved

To achieve these objectives, the various aspects of the project are divided into the following five categories:

#### 1. Project Design

The evaluation assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the overall project approach and strategy and the extent to which the project complements government initiatives. It looks at the validity of the theory that child trafficking will be reduced by improving access to and quality of education, in the light of the targets set at the beginning of the project and progress and experience to date.

#### 2. Project Implementation

The effectiveness of project activities is assessed by reviewing their influence and impact at the community level. The monitoring and evaluation tools developed to measure project progress are reviewed, as is the issue of project coherence with USDOL's common indicators. The degree to which the project addresses issues such as the specific needs of girls, reaching *madrassa* educators, and the transition between formal and nonformal education is also considered.

#### 3. Partnership and Coordination

The evaluation looks at three aspects of project partnership and coordination. The first is the relationship between partner organizations directly responsible for project management, coordination, and implementation; the second is the relationship between the project and government departments; and the third the relationship between the project and other anti-child-trafficking initiatives in Mali, including Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations (OIM) activities and the ILO-IPEC LUTRENA project.

#### 4. Management and Budget

The degree to which management and budget issues have affected project progress is assessed alongside the effectiveness of the working relationship between USDOL and CARE.

#### 5. Sustainability and Impact

The evaluation looks at the project's immediate and potential long-term impact on individual beneficiaries, partner organizations, and government and policy structures in terms of system-wide change on education and child trafficking issues. Finally, the evaluation considers the degree to which project activities are replicable in other regions, and the strategies in place to promote long-term sustainability.

The primary purpose of the evaluation is to learn what is and is not working with the project at its midterm point, which may have implications for the project itself or for the ICLP program in general. The evaluation is an objective inquiry that will enable any necessary corrective action to be taken and successful aspects of the project to be reinforced. Ultimately, the purpose is to ensure that children's needs are being met through project interventions. It is above all a learning process.

## IV EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

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The evaluation consisted of three main phases. Initially there was a desk review of relevant documents including the cooperative agreement, progress and technical reports, the Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) and data tracking tables, work plans, and the baseline study. Because the lead evaluator was based in Mali, interviews with stakeholders in the United States were conducted by e-mail and telephone. A conference call with USDOL-ICLP staff enabled a clear understanding of the TOR and particular concerns and expectations for the evaluation to be established. CARE and World Vision personnel in Mali were asked to comment on and contribute to the TOR during their initial meetings with the lead evaluator, when they took the opportunity to widen the scope of the evaluation to include the relationship between USDOL and CARE.

The second phase consisted of extensive interviews with stakeholders at all levels. During this phase, the lead evaluator interviewed representatives of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry for Women, Children and the Family and the CARE/World Vision project management team in Bamako. A list of questions was sent to USDOL and the U.S. offices of CARE and World Vision to facilitate their input into the evaluation process. The Executive Director and accountant of FDS were interviewed at the NGO's office in Bamako. Two Malian research assistants joined the lead evaluator for a 10-day field trip to the Regions of Mopti and Ségou where they visited 11 villages and talked to—

- Ninety-five boys and girls, including those in and out of school, those who had participated in project activities, and those who had not
- Four large groups of children in class
- Forty teachers and head teachers from both formal and nonformal education establishments
- Thirty-six members of Parents Associations or School Management Committees
- Fifty-four members of Village Watch groups (*Comités de Surveillance Villageois*)
- One-hundred eighty-two members of women's MJT credit and savings groups
- Forty-three locally elected councilors, village chiefs, and other local leaders
- Seven Representatives from local education authority offices (*Centre d'Animation Pédagogique* [CAP] and *Académie d'Enseignement* [AE])
- GAAS-Mali and FDS, the implementing NGOs in the Regions of Mopti and Ségou
- CARE and World Vision's regional supervisors

Having an evaluation team of three made it possible to talk to this large number of people and to triangulate the information received. Some of the villages visited were randomly selected and the others were chosen to include both larger and smaller communities and villages with both easy and more difficult access. Some interviews were carried out in groups ranging from 3 to 12 people, and some in wider discussions with up to 53 women. Because of the fact that the visit took place during a holiday period, the evaluation team was only able to visit two schools and one CDV. CEDs were not open at all. Though the majority of representatives from community organizations were men, women were represented in nearly all group discussions, and women-only meetings with savings and credit groups provided the opportunity for their point of view to be freely expressed.

In Bamako, interviews took place with eight representatives from Home Town Associations, two Education Advisors from local education offices, and with *APAF-Muso Danbe*, the implementing NGO for the District of Bamako. One of APAF's functional literacy centers was visited.

The final phase of the evaluation was the presentation of the broad findings to a meeting of stakeholders that took place in Bamako. Thirty people attended the meeting, including representatives from all key stakeholder organizations and several independent resource people familiar with the issues and the zones of intervention. The first half of the meeting was used to present and discuss the findings and the second half was taken up by small group discussions about the future of the project. The input from this meeting contributed to the content of the evaluation report.

## **V FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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Children migrate from the villages of Mopti and Ségou to work in the larger towns in an effort to counteract the poverty in which the vast majority of people live. Most young people who leave do so of their own free will because of lack of economic opportunities in their villages. This makes them vulnerable to child trafficking and exploitation by unscrupulous individuals who spin tales of fortunes to be made in other countries. The evaluation team heard several stories bearing witness to this. One boy who had met up with traffickers in Sikasso was ultimately sold to a plantation owner in Côte d'Ivoire. After a horrific series of events, he managed to return to his village but had been traumatized by the experience. A transport operator was arrested after arranging to meet a group of youngsters in a remote location to take them to work in Burkina Faso. Recently, nine children from San were apprehended in the company of a man masquerading as a teacher who was taking them to make their fortunes in the goldmines in the south of Mali. Children who manage to arrive in town without mishap find difficult and exploitive working conditions awaiting them.

This section examines how the project is responding to this situation, the strategies the project has developed, and the activities the project is implementing. These findings, conclusions, and recommendations are grouped in the following five categories identified under the evaluation objectives:

- Project Design
- Project Implementation
- Partnership and Coordination
- Budget and Management
- Sustainability and Impact

The findings of the evaluation are organized around the questions posed by USDOL in the TOR, taking the opportunity to not only respond to each question but to expand on the issues concerned as appropriate. Any additional findings are covered after the responses to the questions. Conclusions and recommendations complete the evaluation of the relevant issues.

## 5.1 PROJECT DESIGN

### 5.1.1 Responses to Specific Questions Raised by USDOL

1. *Does the project design complement existing government efforts to reduce trafficking of children and improve the quality of and access to formal and nonformal education in the target areas?*

The Malian Government is signatory to both the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter for the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and Mali adopted its own Child Protection Code in 2002. Various agreements with neighboring countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea Conakry, Liberia, Nigeria, and Togo) have been signed to combat child trafficking in the sub region. Internal measures have been introduced to stop the movement of children across national frontiers without parental authorization (informally known as the Yellow Card). In 2001, the government introduced Village Watch groups (*Comités de Surveillance Villageois*) to encourage local responsibility for protecting children from trafficking, and projects, including those of IPEC-LUTRENA and CARE, have built on this initiative. Thus, the project works within a supportive political and legal framework for child rights and protection and is able to strengthen implementation at a local level, the area where government is probably the weakest.

Where formal education is concerned, government policy involves curriculum reform, teacher training, and increased community participation to increase access and quality in primary education. All three aspects face enormous challenges because of insufficient financial and human resources, but the government, supported by a range of technical and financial partners, is pressing ahead and making progress. The project design supports the introduction of the new curriculum in the intervention zones, thereby complementing and extending government efforts.

Unfortunately government nonformal education policy is not so strong. While a number of CEDs are now in their fourth year of operation, policy development for adult literacy and other nonformal education initiatives is patchy and government commitment is less easy to perceive. The project design supports the government-run CEDs, but these exist in relatively few villages, and so far each CED has offered places to a maximum of 15 boys and 15 girls during their four years of existence. Each CED has only one educator who started working with the first intake in 2002/2003. These children are now in their fourth year, but it is unclear if they will be able to progress to the proposed fifth and sixth years that cover practical apprenticeship or training because the opportunities and facilities for such provision are limited, particularly in rural areas. The Ministry of Education has not yet explained exactly how this will work and is in the process of evaluating the CED initiative. At the present time, the future of CEDs is unclear.

2. *To what extent has the project's design theory (that child trafficking will be reduced by improving the access to and quality of education in both formal and nonformal education) been proven to date?*

In two years of project implementation, project activities have increased awareness of the dangers of child migration and trafficking faster than access to education can be improved.



Enrollment rates are rising in rural schools in the project zones and the demand for education currently exceeds supply. Ironically, growing demand and enrollment rates threaten improved quality. Fewer children are leaving their communities because they are going to school. However, children outside formal and nonformal education may decide or be forced to leave if there are no viable educational or economic alternatives. The design theory is clearly valid, but the education side of the equation is enormous and requires more resources and creativity.

3. *What are the strengths and weaknesses overall of the project approach and strategy? Has the project encountered any major obstacles or barriers (cultural or traditional practices, centuries-old migratory patterns, etc.) related to the design, strategy or approach? Are there any critical assumptions that have not been factored into this design?*

### **Strengths**

The principal strength of the project's approach lies in the involvement of young people and community organizations as responsible actors in local development. As communities become more aware of the consequences of child migration, the dangers of child trafficking, and the benefits of education, they want to protect and support their children. The various strategies introduced by the project build on previous initiatives with similar objectives, resulting in a climate where significant changes in mentality and behavior are taking place.

The project's work with domestic servants in Bamako contributes in the longer term to these changes in mentality and behavior, as many of the girls attending functional literacy classes, which also teach child rights and basic life skills, will eventually return to their villages better equipped to support themselves and their own children. They will have a greater understanding of the dangers of exploitation that migrating young people are exposed to, and therefore, will be less likely to encourage their daughters to migrate and more likely to encourage and enable their children to take advantage of educational opportunities.

Another important aspect of the project design is the development of strategies to improve the economic situation that originally lead to high rates of child migration. MJT credit and savings groups mobilize local savings and give women a model for self-sufficiency, self-help, and organization.

In addition to supporting the immediate objective of combating child migration and trafficking from the areas concerned, support for improved formal and nonformal education contributes to the educational infrastructure that is a prerequisite for all aspects of development.

### **Weaknesses**

One weakness of the overall approach lies in the lack of any concrete assistance to accompany the awareness raising and training that the project offers. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) rates Mali as among the 10 least developed countries in the world and the zones of intervention are some of the poorest in the country. Though it may be good to raise awareness about the dangers of child trafficking and child labor, people in the villages often ask what the practical alternatives to child migration are. There are insufficient facilities to meet

demand in both the formal and nonformal educational establishments. Many young people would prefer to stay in their village or delay leaving until a later date, but they need some form of education, training, or economic incentive to make that a viable proposition. There is no shortage of ideas for vocational training and income-generating possibilities. What is lacking is the seed money to enable small locally managed initiatives to get off the ground. During discussions in project communities, participants mentioned a range of possible activities including gardening, animal rearing, soap making, and fabric dying. These are activities that communities are already familiar with and, as such, would be a good starting point. However, in the longer term, there is the potential to introduce and develop new activities based on local markets, needs, and interests.

A second design weakness is that the project arrives with the problem and its solution already defined, without providing any space for local analysis of the issues or any support for locally developed responses. Many projects, including this one, start with raising awareness, which entails telling communities that they have a problem (in this case child exploitation) and describing the details of the problem and the solutions that the project will offer. An alternative approach is to facilitate a participatory process of analysis around the issues, so, for example, communities can analyze what happens to their children and why, drawing on their own knowledge and experience and developing their own strategies and solutions. The project facilitates the process and contributes additional information and ideas that are not present within the community. The strategies that emerge from such an analysis may be very similar to the original project proposal or communities may come up with creative and adapted proposals that the project had not considered. Whichever is the case, the process by which the community becomes involved in and takes ownership of initiatives is different and leads to more sustainable impact. The more that local people are involved at every stage, the greater their empowerment to continue to develop and manage their communities in a democratic and inclusive manner.

Another weakness is that, while the project document talks about the reintegration of returning children into their communities, no budget line for this was included so no strategies have been developed to support such activities.

### ***Critical Assumptions***

Aside from those mentioned above, the project has not encountered any major obstacles. Perhaps there was an assumption that there would be sufficient places in school to meet an increase in demand and that the CEDs would develop faster to provide more places in nonformal education. The project does challenge established migration patterns, but it arrived at a time when ideas were changing, so was able to seize the moment to reinforce a climate that was starting to be favorable. A big question remains, which is not unique to this project: Educating children involves additional expenses for families and reduces the number of pairs of hands available to work in the household and in the fields—how can incomes be increased to meet the additional expenses?

*4. Were targets set at project inception realistic in terms of project achievements to date and target projections for the life of the project?*

Some of the original targets have been revised downwards since the start of the project because those in the project document were found to be unrealistic in the project implementations phase. Current targets were finalized in the PMP and Data Tracking Tables of 2005 and these will be discussed in more detail in the Project Implementation section. The 200 children originally targeted for reintegration in collaboration with IOM did not materialize, and the targeted number of domestic workers in Bamako has been substantially reduced.

***Additional Findings***

Most key project design issues are covered in the responses to the above questions. However, in addition to complementing government policy with regard to education and child trafficking, the project also sits well within the ongoing decentralization process. The project encourages community organizations to develop action plans and provides advocacy training to support the presentation and (ideally) the monitoring of these plans through their inclusion in Commune Development Plans. This provides an adaptable model for community participation in a decentralized local government, which reinforces both the concept and practice.

In the future, it might be worth remembering the advantage of involving locally based national NGOs in the project design phase. These organizations tend to work in specific areas over a period of years and have much to contribute based on their extensive local knowledge and experience. Neither of the sub contracting organizations, FDS and GAAS-Mali, had any input into the project design. Though this idea may present some logistical complications, it would encourage ownership of and commitment to the project, as would the logical next step, which is to involve local communities in project design and development.

***Conclusions***

The overall project design is well thought out and uses approaches and strategies that have proved to be viable and effective. It complements government policies on several fronts and concentrates its efforts at the community level to support and encourage implementation of those policies. Perhaps there was a degree of over-optimism regarding what is achievable within a four-year period in light of the current government capacity to respond to the enormous challenges of improving the access to and quality of education. The failure to include any concrete assistance to accompany local awareness-raising activities has lead to some frustration and made the work of the implementing NGOs more difficult, but it is clear that communities want to protect and educate their children and are keen to develop opportunities to do so.

***Recommendations***

- More emphasis needs to be placed on developing nonformal education alternatives including vocational training and income-generating activities for older children outside the formal education system. These children currently make up the most immediately vulnerable group, and if they are not provided with any alternative, many of them will almost certainly migrate to the towns in search of work and economic survival. It will be

some time before the formal education system is in the position to meet the needs of all children and some time before all parents are convinced of the need for formal education for all their children. Therefore, it is essential to strengthen nonformal provisions in both the immediate and the long term.

- Strategies need to be developed to enable local communities and national NGOs to be involved in future project design and conception. This early involvement would help to promote a sense of ownership and commitment to project objectives and ensure that strategies and targets are in line with local realities. This may mean being prepared to fund project development or an initial implementation phase that enables the project team to facilitate community analysis of the issues concerned and to make any necessary changes to the project based on ideas emerging from such an analysis. If funding agencies such as USDOL would make this investment, the long-term payoff would be greater and the project impact would be more sustainable.
- Projects should be discouraged from focusing solely on awareness raising and training. The addition of even a relatively small budget to support community developed and managed initiatives has a disproportionate value in terms of generating commitment to project objectives. The availability of funding for community generated proposals increases the credibility of implementing organizations and the capacity of communities to take responsibility for their development. It helps when communities feel that their priorities and realities are understood, rather than that they are being lectured to about what is good for them.

## **5.2 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

### **5.2.1 Responses to Specific Questions Raised by USDOL**

5. *At mid-term, is the project on track in terms of meeting its stated purpose and outputs in the project document? Does it seem likely that the project will meet its intended life of project targets?*

The project is on track and it seems likely that it will meet the majority of its targets and achieve its stated purpose. Awareness-raising activities (Output 1) are clearly having their effect. In terms of policy and collaborative action to combat child migration, trafficking, and exploitive labor (Output 3), the project is also making good progress. Current achievements need to be reinforced and consolidated so that, for example, communewide networks of Village Watch groups become increasingly operational and all commune development plans include appropriate activities to reinforce the protection and education of children. The project needs to continue to publicize government initiatives such as the Yellow Card parental authorization for cross border travel for children, which as yet is not widely understood. Women's MJT savings and credit groups are extremely well supported (Output 4), which indicates that they are having a positive impact on women's lives.

The biggest challenge concerns access to and the quality of education. While the project is contributing to improving the quality of formal and nonformal education (Output 2), the

magnitude of the challenge is beyond the scope of one project. The speed at which the necessary improvements can happen depends on the progress with the introduction of the new curriculum; the provision of more schools, classrooms, and trained teachers; and, above all, nonformal opportunities for education. On the positive side, there is a well-defined process to improve the formal system that, while fragile, is at least underway and moving forward. The nonformal provision is less encouraging as national policy and initiatives are less well defined and seem to be a lower priority for the Ministry of Education.

*6. Has the project developed tools and systems to monitor and evaluate project performance? How effective are these tools and systems?*

In 2004, the project team carried out some research among the communities in the project's "sending" zones of intervention. This research enabled baseline values to be established for indicators concerning levels of child migration and awareness of child trafficking issues, children's rights, and the importance of education. This baseline study was an ambitious attempt to quantify the opinions of a range of community members and it gives an insight into local beliefs, behavior, and points of view. However, responses to questions such as "What do you think of child trafficking and the exploitation of child labor—is it a good thing, a bad thing, or neither good nor bad?" are difficult to usefully classify into the three possibilities offered because two different issues are contained within one question. It is important to establish what the respondent understands by child trafficking and the exploitation of child labor before asking what he or she thinks about it, particularly in communities where children traditionally work alongside their parents.

The PMP defines 19 performance indicators used to monitor and evaluate project progress. The description of the indicators fails to discriminate between the sending and receiving zones of intervention, though in fact the data collected are specific to each.

One group of indicators concerns the numbers of children enrolled in, persisting in, and completing formal and nonformal education programs in the intervention zones. According to CARE's monitoring and evaluation team, project data for these indicators comes from data collected by the local education authorities (CAPs). However, as implementing NGOs are also collecting information directly from the primary schools concerned, it would be interesting to compare the two sets of figures, as local authority data can sometimes be unreliable.

The monitoring system tracks the progress of children who enrolled in the first year of primary education in the first year of the project, so it is difficult to see how the target of 1,700 children completing formal education programs can be achieved as this group of children will only have arrived in year four when the project finishes. The same is true for nonformal programs, as the complete CED cycle is six years long. There is no tracking of children in secondary education in spite of the fact that they are mentioned in the PMP.

It is difficult to assess the effectiveness of the tools and systems developed by the project because the documentation lacks clarity. The narrative parts of the PMP need to be improved to offer a clearer description of the system as a whole. The fact that there are no French versions of the PMP and data tracking tables does not help as, for the majority of those using the documents,

English is not their working language. In the field, there is little sense of the information that is being collected feeding into a larger system, although the basic collection tools seem to be well understood and applied.

7. *USDOL considers direct beneficiaries those children that are withdrawn or prevented from exploitive child labor and provided with direct educational services through the project. Has the project been able to accurately collect data on its direct beneficiaries and report on USDOL common indicators (withdrawal, prevention, retention, and completion) thus far?*

According to the criteria defining USDOL's common indicators, there are currently no direct beneficiaries of the project. Children in the sending zones of Mopti and Ségou are closest to being "prevented from entering exploitive work" but have not as yet received any concrete incentives to assist their participation in education programs as defined by USDOL. The distribution of 3,000 school kits to the most disadvantaged children will take place in the near future, and these children will then become direct beneficiaries of the project.

In the original project conception, there were no direct services for children as described by USDOL. During project budget revision in 2005, the project team proposed changes to an activity that was originally designed to "Provide incentive scholarships for income generating activities for youth GIEs (*Groupes d'Intérêt Economique*—small group enterprises) upon completion of education programs and on the recommendation of feasibility studies," which then became the provision of school kits (composed of bags, pens, copy-books, pencil, eraser, etc.) for 3,000 children over a two-year period. CARE is in the process of purchasing these schools kits, and the registration of these 3,000 children is already completed.

Discussions with the project team revealed concerns about the project's lack of "direct beneficiaries" according to USDOL's criteria, when numbers of children and young people are clearly directly benefiting from project activities. Without community participation in these activities, many children would not be receiving education or have an understanding of children's rights and the dangers of urban migration. The project team finds it difficult to apply the USDOL criteria in a meaningful way to a project that focuses on preventing children from being in a position where they are vulnerable to being exploited by child traffickers and employers, rather than on withdrawing children from exploitive labor. The evaluator also has concerns about this issue because it may have influenced the decision to introduce school kits in place of seed money for income generating activities, which would, in the opinion of the evaluator, have been a more appropriate use of these funds.

8. *USDOL requires grantees to track the working status of each direct beneficiary. Please assess how the project has been doing this thus far.*

As there are currently no direct beneficiaries, this question is not immediately relevant. However, the project has developed tools to track the status of individual children, which it will use to track direct beneficiaries once they exist. There are some problems with the computer software program "Student Tracking System," so CARE's monitoring and evaluation team have experienced difficulty in exploiting its potential.

9. *How has the strategy to divide the project by region (World Vision covering Ségou and CARE covering Mopti and Bamako) affected project implementation (in terms of timeliness, effectiveness, and quality)? Has the project encountered any major problems or challenges due to this arrangement?*

In fact, it is World Vision that covers Ségou and Bamako, subcontracting to FDS and APAF, respectively, and CARE that covers Mopti, subcontracting to GAAS-Mali. The strategy to divide the project by region has worked relatively well. It has enabled CARE and World Vision to exploit their previous knowledge and experience and to learn from each other. The project management team is well-integrated and regular coordination meetings enable information to be shared between all the organizations concerned. Inevitably, there are tensions when two large organizations collaborate on a project, but there is nothing to suggest that these tensions have had an adverse effect on project implementation. World Vision is relatively new to subcontracting to national NGOs, and directly implemented the project in villages in Bla circle until April 2005 when FDS became involved. The evaluation team found that the village that they visited in Bla lagged behind other villages in terms of young peoples' awareness of child trafficking and labor issues, but education and MJT savings and credit activities were going very well. This is the only example of slightly patchy implementation. Activities, for the most part, are being carried out in a broadly similar way across both regions. The overall sense of commitment to project objectives is clear at all levels.

10. *What has been the impact to date of the project on the role of community members in combating child trafficking? Assess the capacity and motivation of community members to continue their involvement with the issue once the project has ended.*

The community members most directly involved in combating child trafficking are the members of the Village Watch groups (*Comités de Surveillance Villageois*). Some of these groups were set up through government initiatives before the arrival of the project, while others were set up as a result of project intervention. The project reinforced already existing groups and offers ongoing training, support, and coordination. There has also been an impact on the role of local councilors, many of who are committed to seeing through education initiatives that combat child migration feature in the Commune Development Plan. Monidiou Kodié, the president of the Village Watch group in Iby (Mopti region), composed a song about the dangers of trafficking and child exploitation, which has been recorded for broadcast on local radios in the project zone.

Village Watch group members are clearly motivated to continue their involvement after the end of the project, but their capacity to do so is less certain. There is already some difficulty in getting local Village Watch networks to function effectively because of the cost of bringing people together from different villages. If Commune Councils can be persuaded to take on the coordination of Village Watch groups there is more chance that they will continue to function when the project finishes.

“The new mentality brought by USDOL will remain because it is something we have understood. Nobody can take that understanding out of our heads.”

*Member of the Village Watch in Toura (Ségou Region)*

*11. How effective has the project been at stimulating interest and participation in the project at the level of communities and parents? Teachers and administrators and other local actors?*

Judging from the high turnout in villages visited by the evaluation team, the project has successfully stimulated interest and participation at the community level. The best way of responding to this question is to let the communities speak for themselves.

The following are a typical sample of comments:

“We are in a tourist zone here, which means children are particularly attracted by easy gains. If we see children in the street, we tell them that if they work hard in school they will have their airplanes and cars, so they go back to school.”

*Parent from Iby (Mopti region)*

“Before USDOL, our children left the village but returned empty handed. Now we prefer to send them to school because at least they are safe there.”

*Parent from Sinsagou (Mopti region)*

“The School Management Committee and Parents Association manage teachers’ salaries and the school canteen. Each pupil pays 500 F (\$1), and, since the arrival of USDOL, every family in the village contributes 20Kg of millet to the costs of running the school. Before, only those with children in school contributed. There is also a field that is cultivated collectively to support school costs.”

*Community school teacher from Toura (Ségou region)*

“During the organization of the youth camps, the Commune Council was responsible for arranging food and lodging for the children. We paid the cooks and selected local youth to work with the participants.”

*Councilor from Dinangourou (Mopti region)*

“There are fewer dropouts from the CEDs in the Commune since the arrival of the project. A site has been chosen for the new CED that will be built and the bricks have already been made.”

*Councilor from Dinangourou (Mopti region)*

“The Commune Development Plan includes the construction of at least one school in each village so that all school age children can be enrolled.”

*Councilor from Dinangourou (Mopti region)*



“In our Commune Development Plan, we have included the creation of income-generating activities for women and young people to support USDOL’s actions. We have even obtained financing for three villages to develop soap making, animal rearing, and vegetable gardening with the PAIB. We are also planning to build seven community schools.”

*Councilor from Téné (Ségou region)*

“Our Commune Council approached the CAP and negotiated the reintegration of 99 children who had been excluded from school because they were too old.”

*Councilor from Diéli (Ségou region)*

Members of CSOs, teachers, parents, local councilors, and sub prefects (the government representatives at the Commune level) are all involved in various project activities and readily express their support for the project, the importance of the messages it is promoting, and the contribution it is making to their communities. The implementing NGOs can be particularly proud of their success in stimulating community interest and participation.

*12. Assess the impact of the curriculum enrichment and teacher training (p. 18 of project document) on improving the quality and relevance of both the formal and nonformal education programs. Have modules been developed and disseminated that specifically address child trafficking and exploitive labor? Please seek the viewpoints of parents, teachers, students, community members, and education officials.*

In 2004 and early 2005, the project organized and financed training workshops for 30 CPs (local education authority advisors/supervisors) and 90 teachers working in formal and nonformal education in the project intervention zones. They were trained in learner-centered, problem-solving teaching methodologies; mother tongue teaching; and the use of teaching modules concerning child trafficking, child labor, and child rights. In late 2005 and early 2006, the Ministry of Education organized trainings to equip teachers and head teachers to implement the new curriculum. The project financed the participation and materials of 49 year-one teachers and the head teachers from the corresponding schools, with the aim of extending curriculum introduction to additional schools in the regions of Mopti and Ségou.

There is no doubt that these initiatives are having a positive impact on improving the quality of education in the schools concerned, but this is a process that needs long-term, ongoing support to be really effective. During the evaluation, a number of difficulties were mentioned by education personnel at different levels, one of which was language. A CED teacher said she had been trained in French rather than Bambara, the language she understands best and in which she teaches. Some teachers were trained in Bambara but had to apply the curriculum in Bomu. Some CDV teachers have yet to receive training and are waiting for this to take place.

For the curriculum training, the project provided a full set of materials to each of the teachers that it financed, whereas the ministry failed to do the same for the rest of the participants. As a result, the evaluation team found that the Dinangourou school in Koro (Mopti region) was not implementing the curriculum because other schools were using its materials, whereas in the

neighboring village of Tonu, where there is only a biannual intake, the curriculum-trained teacher was not using his materials. Teachers complained of being trained in very large numbers (100 in one workshop), which made it difficult to understand and practice what was being taught. Teachers trained in classical methodologies are finding it difficult to relearn their approach to teaching, particularly when the training workshops often do not use the very methodologies that they are attempting to promote.

The project has rightly sought to integrate the training it provides with the Ministry of Education system by using ministry personnel as trainers and giving education authorities a degree of responsibility for the coordination of project-sponsored workshops. The down side of this approach has been that the criteria for selecting participants have sometimes not been respected, resulting in some teachers, who are not best placed to apply the training, being the ones who receive it. This is exacerbated by unwillingness on the part of some local education authorities to collaborate with NGO field workers who could help to monitor non-technical aspects of education provision in villages that rarely see a ministry supervisor.

Observation of two year-one classes applying the new curriculum revealed animated and enthusiastic children engaged in active learning. They were seated in groups and collaborating with each other to respond to the teacher's questions. There were some materials displayed on the classroom walls (including the project's NO to child trafficking and YES to education poster).

Many teachers are actively involved in anti-child-migration and trafficking activities in their communities, and project sponsored training and modules concerned with this have contributed to raising the overall level of awareness. One of the strengths of the project is that nothing happens in isolation and the different activities come together at the community level for a combined and cumulative impact.

*13. Assess the effectiveness of the youth leadership approach to reach at-risk and not-at-risk youth to raise awareness and generate "protective" strategies. What protective strategies have been generated to date? How effective are these strategies from the perspective of the youth involved? From other perspectives?*

The youth camps at the center of the youth leadership approach have been one of the highlights of the project, and they have been extremely effective in informing and engaging both children and their communities. In a society where activities specifically designed for youth are rare, young people from different villages enjoyed living and working together for several days. The fact that communities were largely responsible for the organization and running of these events generated a lot of interest and commitment to their success. In village after village visited by the evaluation team, young people described their experience—the detailed content of theatre sketches and videos that they had performed and watched, the discussions that had taken place, and the games they had played. They spoke of the dangers of child trafficking and labor and the meaning of children's rights and children's responsibilities, as well as the importance and benefits of education. The camps gave both the young participants and the organizers a status and responsibility within their communities, and the instruction to go back to their villages and share what they had learned was taken seriously by children both in and out of school. While all

village children in project zones can be considered to be at-risk, those out of school are more vulnerable. The fact that the camps brought together both groups of children and involved them as responsible actors in the debate was beneficial both as a developmental experience for individual participants and in raising the issues as matters of debate in the local arena.

“For three days we did sketches and watched films about working children and child trafficking. It was really interesting. We learned about what can happen to children in the towns, but the best thing was that we got to know children from other villages. Exploitation is anything that stops a child’s development or stops him going to school.”

*Young boy in Téné (Ségou region)*

With information as the point of departure, better-informed youth and parents are increasingly committed to education as their principal protective strategy. Several children interviewed said that they still wanted to go to Bamako, but they understood that it was better to study first so that they would be less vulnerable and better able to find work and look after themselves. Older children who are out of school are aware of the limited education options available to them. They talked about the sorts of small income generating projects that would enable them to stay in their villages with hope of attaining the consumer goods to which they naturally aspire—motorbikes, marriage trousseaus, and the like. These youngsters regretted that they were not able to read and write and said that if the opportunity to learn arose they would be first in line. There is room for some creative thinking here to bring together school students and non-school students as teachers and learners, if the idea that it is only trained teachers who can pass on what they have learned can be overcome. The child-to-child approach (as used in this project) is clearly effective where raising awareness and sharing information are concerned so it is only a small step further to extend this to passing on skills.

“I don’t want to leave the village. I want to go on studying so that I don’t suffer like those who drop out of school to push carts or other work that doesn’t pay much.”

*Girl from Iby (Mopti region)*

*14. Evaluate the degree to which the project has been effective at reaching madrassa educators to reduce exploitive practices in madrassa schools. Have madrassa administrators or teachers been receptive to the project’s message and or approach?*

There are two significant forms of Islamic education in Mali and both are sometimes translated by the term *madrassa*. The first, which are known in French as *medersa*, are schools for both boys and girls, with a curriculum that covers religious teaching and a varying range of other subjects. The government is working to bring these schools into the state system and included some of their teachers in national teacher training preparation for the introduction of the new curriculum. The Ministry has clustered some *medersas* with other types of schools to promote ongoing teacher training and sharing of experience, knowledge, and resources. *Medersa* teachers tend to be less well equipped for teaching the broader range of curriculum subjects and operate in Arabic rather than in French, which creates some complications for combined teacher training. Many of the villages covered by the project have *medersa* schools but the project does not as yet

work specifically with them, apart from sending them children for whom the other schools cannot find places. Project target schools for teacher training purposes are those state and community schools that are already proficient in mother tongue teaching.

The second group is made up of Koranic schools, which teach recitation of the Koran and more in-depth religious studies at more advanced levels. It is a degraded form of this type of school that can be said to have exploitive practices. Traditionally, a group of boys was entrusted to a Koranic schoolteacher who was sometimes itinerant, moving from village to village with his charges, while carrying out both practical and theoretical instruction. The boys would be sent to ask for food in village households so that the group could eat and also to encourage humility. In recent times, with more difficult economic conditions, some parents have used these schools as a socially acceptable way of off-loading extra mouths to feed. Villages are even less able to support the itinerant groups and not all teachers are as devout as they might be. Therefore, the degradation of the system has led to boys experiencing brutality and hunger, and many have run away from Koranic schools and can be seen in significant numbers on the streets of most towns and cities, particularly Mopti and Bamako. The project does not work at all with Koranic schools, but GAAS-Mali is planning some advocacy to draw government attention to the need for action. This is an extremely sensitive issue because of the religious connotations, and the Ministry of Education is only just starting to make tentative moves to work with these schools.

*15. How successful are the “enrollment drives” and “incentive programs” at raising community awareness of nonformal and formal education options and actually increasing enrollment in target area education programs? What other strategies or incentives has the project employed to increase enrollment in both formal and nonformal programs? Can changes in enrollments be directly attributed to project interventions?*

The principal strategies used by the project to increase enrollment are door-to-door canvassing by parent associations and other local actors, in combination with training to enable local leaders to raise the level of awareness of the issues in the community as a whole. This complements project activities that increase the awareness of young people themselves. The combination of these strategies has been extremely effective. Enrollment rates have risen dramatically, to the extent that demand now exceeds supply in most villages covered by the project.

The community school in Kirina (Ségou region) is a typical example. It enrolled 11 children in year one in 2003, 25 children in 2004, and 33 children in 2005. In Dinangourou (Mopti region), the school was faced with 143 children wanting to enroll in the first year in 2005, whereas the new curriculum sets a maximum of 70 children in one class. A similar situation arose in Diallassagou (Mopti region) so the School Management Committee, Parents Association, and Village Watch decided to open a kindergarten to cope with the overflow. There is no proper building or trained teacher, but a room in a local government building has been made available and a young man is attempting to teach more than 40 children with virtually no equipment or materials. Again in Orossoguo (Mopti region), 178 children arrived to register for year one, while the school could only take 75. The school in Téné (Ségou region) had 217 children wanting to enroll in year one and only had space for 87. Wherever the evaluation team went, it was the same story of demand outstripping supply.

While there is no doubt that project interventions are having a significant effect on enrollment rates, there are also other projects and government initiatives contributing to a general climate that encourages schooling for both boys and girls, so the effects are cumulative and cannot be solely attributed to this project.

*16. Assess the project's progress at strengthening capacity and coordination between CSOs (Civil Society Organizations) and government to enforce current laws (such as Carte Jaune, compulsory education to 9th grade, and minimum working age of 14). Assess the project's success at generating support and "buy-in" by these groups for project activities and goals.*

While the project has made members of CSOs aware of the existing legal framework during various training workshops, there is as yet little evidence that many of these measures are taken seriously or are well understood even by government representatives at the local level. Some people had heard of the Yellow Card in the villages visited by the evaluation team, but few were aware of how or where to obtain one and there was confusion about whether it is required for in-country travel as well as for crossing national boundaries. Even the supposed issuing authorities were unclear about its availability. The representative of the National Office for Child and Family Welfare was surprised and unhappy to be informed of the lack of availability and knowledge of the Yellow Card among authorities in the project zones. During the stakeholders meeting, she was keen to explain the measures that her office was taking.

As the idea of compulsory education is fairly theoretical when there are not enough places in schools to cater to those who are queuing up to attend, the project is probably quite wise in giving greater priority to other aspects.

Though the project has been successful in generating local civil society support for its activities and publicizing the legal measures put in place by the National Office of Children and Family Welfare, national and local government has perhaps been less successful in implementing those measures on the ground. Effective coordination between government and CSOs has yet to be developed, particularly at the local level.

*17. Assess in totality the quality improvements ("strengthening") on CEDs (Centers for Development Education) in the target areas. Please describe the specific improvements the project has made to the quality of education.*

The project, in collaboration with the local education authorities, has provided training for 38 CED, CDV, and CAF teachers in participatory teaching methodologies, mother tongue teaching, and the use of modules concerning child trafficking, child labor, and child rights. The evaluation team was unable to visit any working CEDs because they had not reopened after the holiday period. The teachers that the team spoke with appreciated the training, which is certainly improving the quality of the education provided in the establishments involved.

On a broader basis, it is important to understand that CEDs exist in less than a quarter of project villages. They offer places for only 30 children (15 boys and 15 girls), with only one intake every four years. The teacher from Déguéssagou (Mopti region) said that in the fourth year, only

17 students remained of the 30 who had started in year one. This means that the principal type of nonformal education provision in the project zones is limited in the impact it can have because of the low number of children that it caters to. CEDs are a new initiative that will complete their first four-year cycle in the 2005–2006 academic year. The plan is that this theoretical phase will be followed by two years of vocational training or apprenticeship, but plans for this stage are as yet somewhat piecemeal and some CED students are worried that it will not materialize.

*18. How successful has the project been in focusing on the specific needs of girls? What specific strategies have been employed to reduce their vulnerability to child trafficking and increase their enrollment in educational programs?*

Project activities in the sending zones have pursued a policy of gender equity, including equal numbers of girls and boys in all project activities and looking at the needs of both groups. The project intervention areas traditionally provide large numbers of female domestic servants to Mali's towns and cities, so the particular dangers that they are exposed to (e.g., sexual exploitation, unwanted pregnancy, illegal abortion) have featured in the dangers of child migration highlighted by the project. APAF also works specifically with girls employed as domestic servants in Bamako to improve their living and working conditions and enroll them in nonformal education classes. A visit to these classes revealed fairly articulate and self-confident young women, coping with a range of difficult circumstances. While these girls are still working and their situation is less than ideal, they are better equipped to look after themselves and seek help when they need it than they would be without the support from APAF. They are also receiving basic education including information about child rights, which increases their self-confidence and contributes to reducing their overall vulnerability.

While the numbers of boys enrolling in school in the project zones is still higher than the number of girls, some classes have more girls than boys and the growing tendency is for parents to send both boys and girls to school in equal numbers.

*19. Assess the effectiveness of the “creative methodologies” proposed by the project such as Child-to-Child Communication, Youth Travel Exchanges, Youth Theater, and Youth Radio and TV to reach at-risk children.*

This is an area where the project has performed particularly well. The youth camps successfully exploit and develop many of these methodologies including child-to-child communication, theatre, and audiovisual supports. TV has not been used extensively, as most of the villages do not have electricity and access to television is limited. However, local radios broadcast regular information spots, longer roundtable discussions, and information on specific events, which supports and reinforces the messages of the training workshops and youth camps.

“USDOL trained two of my students, who continue to raise the awareness of their peers both in and out of school. They talk about children's rights, the importance of school, and the need to stop the migration, traffic, and work that exploit children. A lot of parents have been really surprised by the success of this approach.”

***Head teacher in Toura (Ségou region)***

The project activity involving a trip to Bamako by 300 children from the regions of Mopti and Ségou in 2005 was widely acclaimed by both the adults and the young people who participated. It also raised the national profile of child trafficking and child labor issues, and local members of parliament became involved. In every village visited by the evaluation team, children came forward to talk about their time in Bamako, which many saw for the first time during the trip. Many children bore witness to the powerful experience of seeing the reality for themselves and meeting others like them struggling to live on the city streets. This, probably more than any other single project activity, changed the outlook of the children who participated.

“We saw unhappy children who told us what had happened to them. We went to a place for abandoned children, and we saw a training center where you learn how to dye material. In the evenings, we watched films about exploitation and children who were forced to work. It really changed my ideas, and I’m still talking about it to my friends. Before that, I was thinking about going to look for work in Bamako, but now I’m going to stay in the village. I help my Dad in the fields, but I’d like to learn to read and write if I could.”

***School dropout from Iby (Mopti region)***

*20. Assess effectiveness and impact of the income generating activities (“resource leveraging”) of the project such as the MJT (Musow ka Jigiya Ton or Women’s Hope Collective). What is the stage of progress to date on these activities?*

There are currently 93 MJT groups with 3,054 members in 63 villages covered by the project. Some villages have as many as three or four groups, many of which have been operating for at least a year. A total of 5,538,575 F CFA (US\$11,075) has been saved. Some women’s groups that were already in existence adapted themselves to MJT criteria, while others were created in response to the project. In some villages where other projects offer financial incentives for saving, the groups have been less popular. The evaluation team spoke to members of nine MJT groups in six villages. Women turned out in force to meet the team and were uniformly enthusiastic about both the income generating aspects of the group and the access to information concerning child welfare. The income generated has been used to—

- Buy school materials and equipment, including paraffin lamps
- Buy clothes and shoes for women and children
- Support small trading activities for girls who are not in school
- Increase food security by buying millet on a communal basis when the price is low so that some of it can be sold when the price rises and some can be borrowed if members run short
- Cover prescription costs
- Buy food and soap and meet other family needs

“This year, one girl finished her primary education and was going to leave for Bamako because her parents couldn’t afford to pay for her school books. Her mother contacted me to ask what to do, and I went to see the President of the Parents’ Association. He bought her 10 exercise books, pens and a school bag, and helped out with the transport costs because the secondary school is in another village.”

***MJT member in Boloma (Ségou region)***

It is clear that MJT groups are having an impact on the lives of their members and their children. Women were well informed about the dangers of child migration, trafficking, and labor. They explained that a child should not be expected to carry out a task beyond his or her physical capacity. They said that they made an effort to make sure that their daughters did not have too many household chores so that they could arrive at school on time. They said that before USDOL, they were not as aware of these issues and even encouraged their daughters to migrate to look for work rather than attending school. MJT groups enable women to have easy access to credit and the accompanying social fund means that they can respond to financial emergencies without relying on social obligation. They now have “tranquility of spirit” as one woman put it.

When talking about the information part of the MJT meeting:

“Some boys have died after coming back from the town. Now we talk about AIDS with our children, even the small ones, girls as well as boys...”

***MJT member in Diallassagou (Mopti region)***

Individual groups have accumulated between 65,000 F CFA and 225,000 F CFA (US\$130 to US\$450) in their credit fund. Each individual loan is fairly small and some groups suggested that if USDOL could supplement the loan fund, they would be able finance larger scale activities. However, as USDOL policy does not allow for direct cash transfers to target beneficiaries and the MJT approach promotes sustainability by encouraging mature groups to negotiate with other development partners or micro finance institutions to meet their developing needs for capital, this proposal is not viable within the context of the project or desirable in terms of encouraging groups to become self reliant. A current internal evaluation of these groups will offer a more in-depth look at their operation, their impact, and their long-term potential.

## **5.2.2 Additional Findings**

### ***Child Migration***

The evaluation team discovered that Village Watch groups (*Comités de Surveillance Villageois*) use different strategies in the villages of Mopti and Ségou. In Mopti, groups take a highly proactive stance. In addition to raising awareness, they actively search public transport leaving villages on market days and remove unaccompanied children, an activity which has lead to some confrontations with transport operators. This strategy was developed with community consensus after an extensive awareness-raising campaign concerning the dangers faced by young people when they migrate to urban areas. In Ségou, groups concentrate on raising awareness and



monitoring children leaving and arriving in each village. They are wary of physically removing children because they have no legal jurisdiction. It will be important to see if the different approaches have any noticeably different long-term results.

GAAS-Mali monitors the numbers of migrating children who are intercepted and returned to their villages (Mopti region), and FDS records the names of children who leave or return to their villages (Ségou region). However, the lack of any specific help to return and reintegrate intercepted and other returning children is seen as a significant gap in project provision. Several types of help were requested, particularly funds to cover the costs of looking after intercepted children until they reached their village, counseling and support for reintegration into the community, and help to develop meaningful occupations so that, once returned, young people will stay. The project did not plan any budget line for the reintegration of intercepted or returned children in spite of the fact that the project proposal included these important activities.

### **Education**

The project has not tackled the issue of transition from nonformal to formal education, which is not institutionalized in the country as a whole or in the project zones. Any such transfer is currently a one off event negotiated between individual schools with agreement from the local education office (CAP), usually as a result of advocacy to support the transfer of a particularly promising child.

The lack of school canteens is a serious problem in many schools. Children traveling from nearby villages are frequently hungry and do not eat properly at lunchtime, which impedes their capacity to learn. Some villages have succeeded in organizing canteens and others receive outside assistance—all are somewhat precarious.

In 2005, CARE Mali obtained four years' funding from CARE USA's Patsy Collins Trust Fund Initiative to promote girls' education, which has enabled the start of Development Education for Girls' Empowerment (DEGE). This will promote nonformal education for girls by building two innovative CEDs for girls within the project zones. DEGE will also develop an improved CED curriculum that is better adapted to the needs of the girls concerned, and will facilitate the establishment of the Consensual Communities of Human Rights originally envisaged in the cooperative agreement with USDOL. CARE Mali deserves praise for this initiative, which directly contributes to the much-needed nonformal education provision in the project zones.

### **APAF and Hometown Associations**

The project has enabled APAF to extend its work to reach more girls working as domestic servants in Bamako. The NGO's functional literacy centers have widened their curriculum to include child rights and life skills and the project has helped them to introduce more participatory teaching methods. APAF has assisted Hometown Associations to reorganize themselves and develop their activities and understanding of children's rights issues. While Hometown Associations undoubtedly offer a degree of protection and security to girls who come to Bamako from their villages, they also act as informal employment agencies, finding domestic servants for those who approach them with this request, which makes their position somewhat ambiguous. As members of these associations become increasingly aware of child rights issues

and exploitive labor conditions, it is hoped that they will encourage young people to take advantage of opportunities back home in their villages, as these become more available.

### ***Sporting Activities***

Sporting activities were particularly effective in Bla circle. They were mentioned everywhere as an important project contribution to community life. One boy said that he had been thinking about going to Bamako but lost interest in the idea because he was so absorbed by the football tournament that was in progress. Apart from providing much needed leisure activity, such activities offer the opportunity for young people to develop leadership and organizational skills. They promote teamwork, build self confidence, and add to the fabric of community life, all elements that play a role in influencing a young person's decision to stay or leave the village.

### ***Conclusions***

The project is clearly succeeding in making local communities more aware of the dangers faced by migrating children and the advantages of education. This has resulted in a growing demand for schooling. The numbers of girls and boys enrolled in formal education are rising, and in many villages demand now exceeds supply. Fewer young people are deciding to leave their communities to look for work, and consequently there is a growing demand for nonformal education, which is currently fairly limited. The Patsy Collins initiative is a welcome step toward meeting this demand. The project is contributing to better quality education by providing teacher training in collaboration with local education authorities, but the magnitude of the task means that this contribution can have only limited impact. The project has successfully facilitated the collaboration of local actors to fight against child trafficking and exploitive labor and to promote education. The MJT strategy to mobilize local savings is proving successful and impacting the lives of women and their capacity to support their children in school.

### ***Recommendations***

- NGOs should experiment with including football tournaments for girls in sporting activities if the girls seem interested. Several girls in Toura (Ségou Region) expressed interest when asked and such tournaments have been successful in other rural regions in Mali.
- The possibility of extending the child-to-child approach to tackle literacy teaching should be investigated. This would be a virtually cost-free strategy for helping children out of school to learn to read and write, while reinforcing the skills of those in formal education. It would need to be entirely voluntary on the part of the participants and would require enthusiasm and creativity from some NGO field workers to get it off the ground.
- The project should encourage the National Office of Children and Family Welfare to ensure that the Yellow Card is available from authorities within the project zones and offer any required support that seems feasible. There is little point in raising awareness about something that is not available and it makes the other issues covered less credible.

- The project should look into developing strategies to assist reintegration of returning children, as foreseen in the project document.
- The project should identify schools that have developed an effective working canteen and facilitate exchange visits with schools that would like to organize something similar so that they can see how it is done.
- The project should investigate and promote the idea that girls trained by APAF who wish to return to their villages could teach in CDVs or other nonformal education centers.

## **5.3 PARTNERSHIP AND COORDINATION**

### **5.3.1 Responses to Specific Questions Raised by USDOL**

*21. What have been the major issues and challenges involved in managing the working relationship between CARE and World Vision? Has this been a productive partnership?*

There do not seem to have been any major issues in managing this working relationship, and everyone seems happy with the partnership. Both CARE and World Vision say that they have benefited from the experience through shared learning and practice.

*22. How effective was CARE early on in establishing an effective working relationship with key government ministries, district and local government officials, and school administrators in efforts to address child trafficking, child protection, and education for children in the three target regions?*

CARE has established an effective working relationship with the National Office of Children and Family Welfare, which is part of the Ministry for Women, Children and the Family. The project regularly participates in Ministry coordinated meetings and workshops with other technical and financial partners concerned with child trafficking and labor issues. The relationship with the National Education Ministry seems less close but adequate for project purposes.

In the regions, CARE, World Vision, and subcontracting NGOs have established working relationships with first- and second-tier education authorities with varying degrees of effectiveness. There was some difficulty deciding which tier education authorities should sign the working agreement with covering project activities, and eventually agreements were signed with both tiers. There are some extremely effective working relationships between individuals working for government and NGOs, and the Director of the AE in Douantza (Mopti region) showed great interest and commitment to the project during the evaluation.

It is not unusual to find tensions between project staff and government employees. Projects are perceived as making demands on the time and energy of education authority personnel, while being better resourced. Projects feel that they are only asking government staff to carry out their normal tasks and duties. Nonetheless, they sometimes assist with associated costs of supervisory

visits. The bureaucracy of government departments often frustrates the more pragmatic approach of the NGOs.

During the evaluator's interview with representatives of the National Office of Children and Family Welfare, representatives expressed their sincere appreciation for the project's contribution to the fight against child trafficking and labor.

At the commune, village, and school level, GAAS-Mali and FDS have established extremely effective working relationships with school administrators, traditional leaders, and local government authorities. The evaluation team was not aware of any issues or difficulties at this level and was impressed by the degree of trust, cooperation, participation, and support for project activities. This also applies to NGO relationships with local CSOs and communities as a whole. FDS and GAAS-Mali are to be congratulated for their approach, attitude, and strategies for project implementation. Much of the success of the project is a result of the high levels of commitment and professionalism of their supervisors and field workers.

*23. Evaluate the relationships between CARE/World Vision and other NGO partners such as APAF-Muso Danbe, OIM, and the ILO-IPEC LUTRENA project. How successful has the project been at fostering collaboration and coordination with these organizations?*

There is a good relationship between CARE and GAAS-Mali, and management issues are resolved with tolerance and understanding of the different pressures faced by each organization. The team spirit in the field is palpable. Similarly the relationship between World Vision and FDS is strong enough to enable open discussion of issues that arise. APAF appreciates the capacity building work that World Vision has done to help them develop their activities, and while there is still need for some work to clarify accounting systems, the relationship appears to be working effectively. FDS and APAF exchange information about girls from project villages in Ségou region, which does not seem to be the case with GAAS-Mali and APAF. The relationship between CARE/World Vision and the IOM and the IPEC LUTRENA project is limited to common participation in Ministry meetings to coordinate and discuss activities.

*24. What, if any, "duplication of efforts" or "double counting" is occurring in the project target areas? How does CARE/World Vision prevent "double counting" of beneficiaries from occurring in areas where multiple NGOs are working?*

There is no possibility for duplication effects because the subcontracting NGOs work in different regions with different individuals.

### **5.3.2 Conclusions**

Considering the large number of organizations that makes up the project team, internal project relationships are effective and efficient and there is a good team spirit and a general commitment to the project objectives and obtaining results.

### 5.3.3 Recommendations

- GAAS-Mali, FDS, and APAF need to discuss the potential advantages of exchanging information about girls from project villages who attend APAF centers and develop a system if it appropriate.
- World Vision and APAF need to work on developing a common understanding of accounting systems and procedures.
- The project should investigate any advantages to developing closer working relationships with the regional representatives of the National Office of Child and Family Welfare (this was raised during the evaluator's interview with the representatives of the national office).

## 5.4 MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

### 5.4.1 Responses to specific questions raised by USDOL

*25. How effective has the working relationship been between the CARE /World Vision field offices and U.S. headquarters?*

There is every indication that these relationships work well.

*26. What management issues, if any, have impeded project progress?*

Beyond the day-to-day challenges that face any ambitious project of this size and complexity, the most significant issue to emerge is the effect that changes and delays in decisions in Bamako and the United States has on project implementation in the villages. Such changes and delays make the work of the subcontracting NGOs more difficult and less effective, so keeping such events to a minimum, with a strong emphasis on good communication, would enhance project implementation. Each time a field worker has to explain to a community that a commitment has changed, his credibility in that community is affected, and if this happens too frequently, trust is destroyed.

*27. Has the change in project director affected project implementation in any way? If so, please describe.*

The change in project director has apparently had a positive effect on project implementation. Everyone involved in the project was full of praise for the way in which the current director has succeeded in streamlining and coordinating activities. The evaluator takes the opportunity to reinforce this view. The project director was tireless in answering questions and providing information throughout the evaluation period in spite of being extremely busy with other matters.

*28. What budget issues, if any, have affected project implementation?*

The renegotiation of the budget in 2005 took three months, which resulted in some activities being delayed until the following year of the project. The lack of any budget for reintegration of children returning to their communities or for developing Consensual Communities of Human Rights means that these aspects of the project have not been implemented as originally envisaged in the project document.

## **5.4.2 Additional Findings**

The relationship between USDOL and CARE seems to work well. The CARE US office finds USDOL to be helpful and receptive to hearing their concerns regarding project implementation and open to project revision when necessary. Discussions about USDOL's common indicators have been the principal issue over recent months and there is now a common understanding of what these mean within the context of this project. CARE Mali has found frequent changes of USDOL project officers a bit difficult and expressed the hope that things have now stabilized and there will be no further changes. Language has sometimes been a barrier both for USDOL and project personnel.

## **5.4.3 Conclusions**

Management and budget issues are reasonably effectively resolved as they arise and have generally supported effective project implementation.

## **5.4.4 Recommendations**

- Essential project documents, including this report, should be translated into French as a matter of course to enable all members of the project management and implementation team to have common access to and understanding of the parameters that define the project.
- During the remaining period, USDOL should provide a budget to experiment with community proposed and managed initiatives to discourage migration to the towns, in line with recommendations made in the following section.

## **5.5 SUSTAINABILITY AND IMPACT**

### **5.5.1 Responses to Specific Questions Raised by USDOL**

*29. Where does the project stand in terms of identifying an effective exit strategy that will promote long-term sustainability?*

The project's exit strategy is inherent in its overall approach, which is based on involving and engaging communities in activities that discourage child migration and trafficking and encourage education. A change in mentality and behavior with regard to the dangers of child migration and the importance of education is the surest way of ensuring sustainability, and there is evidence

that this is taking place. Local actors, particularly Village Watch members, communal and administrative authorities, teachers, and parents are involved in a range of associated activities that bear witness to their commitment to change.

More specifically, the project is coordinating a network of Village Watch groups (*Comités de Surveillance Villageois*) so that they can share experience and support each other in the longer term. Communities are being trained and encouraged to use local democratic processes to ensure that their concerns are taken into account in Commune Development Plans. However, the fact remains that these are communities with limited resources, and unless the opportunities for education expand to meet demand and their economic situation changes, poverty will inevitably continue to result in some migration.

*30. What appears to be the project's impact to date, if any, on (a) individual beneficiaries (children, parents, teachers, etc.), (b) partner organizations (local NGOs, community groups, schools, etc.), and (c) government and policy structures in terms of system-wide change on education and child trafficking issues? Is this impact likely to affect positive changes in behavior against child trafficking in the longer term?*

There is better understanding and greater awareness of the dangers of child trafficking, labor, and migration among individual beneficiaries in the project zones. More children are receiving education and fewer are leaving their villages. The youth camps and the visit to Bamako had an enormous impact on the young people who took part, in terms of their personal development and desire to have an education. Women in particular say that they now think differently about sending their daughters to Bamako to work. Teachers are better equipped to provide empowering and appropriate education because they have more teaching skills and materials that they can call on.

There has also been a positive impact at an institutional level. NGOs have increased experience and knowledge, which will continue to inform their work after the end of the project. CSOs are better equipped to organize themselves effectively to plan and implement activities in their communities and to exploit local democratic processes.

The immediate impact on schools is more mixed in that the project has stimulated a demand for education that they are currently unable to meet. Improvements in education quality because of the introduction of the new curriculum have also reduced the number of places available by limiting classes to a more manageable size. Schools are trying to cope with increased demand without anywhere near the necessary resources and it is unclear where these are to be found.

The project has supported and worked in line with government policy but has not had a major impact in this area because an appropriate legal and policy framework predates the project.

The impact of the project is likely to affect positive long-term changes in behavior to limit child migration at individual and institutional levels, particularly if the government strengthens its policy implementation to reinforce the changing climate. The rapidity with which the formal education system can develop to respond to demand and that nonformal education opportunities can be created are key factors for the sustainability of project impact with regard to child migration and trafficking.

*31. What is the capacity of the income generating activities to generate substantial income, and what are the realistic implications for long-term sustainability of these programs?*

MJT groups give every indication of being sustainable in that once the system is well established and understood they require no outside assistance to run successfully. The level of enthusiasm for these groups bodes well for their long-term survival. They can continue to provide income that will help women meet the needs of their families and support their children's schooling. What is more questionable is the capacity of these groups to generate enough savings to support larger development initiatives or have a significant impact on the local economy. World Vision is experimenting with linking MJT groups with local micro finance institutions, with the idea of mobilizing larger loans once the groups are well established.

*32. To what extent would it be possible to replicate the project's work in other regions? What efforts would be most easily transferable?*

The general view expressed during the evaluation is that project activities could be replicated in other regions without any difficulty. Both the project team and government representatives reacted enthusiastically to the idea. The regions of Koulikoro and Sikasso were mentioned as areas that would benefit from a similar project because they have similar migration patterns. Other villages in the regions of Mopti and Ségou are already asking for project activities to be extended to include them.

*33. How has the project changed perceptions—at all levels: community, parents, children, government, etc.—about the importance of education for children as an alternative to child labor? What has been the impact of the project on national policies that relate to children, child labor and education? Please provide specific examples from beneficiaries.*

The project has contributed to a growing understanding of the importance of school education for all children as a prerequisite for the development of the country and its citizens. Parents and communities are increasingly keen to send both boys and girls to school as the best preparation for their economic and social well being in later life. These children are limited by the educational opportunities available and the effects of poverty. The project has not had a major impact on national policies because these were already well developed upon its arrival, but project activities have reinforced the understanding and implementation of these policies at the local level.

*34. What evidence is there of government willingness to carry on project implementation or objectives once the project has ended? Is the project actively working to achieve this as an outcome? Which areas will continue?*

The government has a national action plan for fighting child trafficking and labor and has expressed its intention of continuing to implement this with the assistance of its technical and financial partners. There is no indication that the government will take over the specific activities of the USDOL project in its zones of intervention, and there is no expectation on the part of the



project that this should happen. Local activities that will continue are those that have support at the community level, those that are implemented by CSOs, and those that Commune Councils choose to support and encourage. Village Watch groups are well placed to continue in that they are part of the national government action plan and have support at the community level. If Commune Councils take over their coordination and allocate minimal funding to support their operation, there is every hope that they will survive the departure of the project. Where education is concerned, initiatives to promote Education For All will continue in line with government policy.

### **5.5.2 Conclusions**

The project has succeeded in creating a demand for both formal and nonformal education and in convincing a significant number of young people to stay in their communities, with parents who support this decision. The greatest priority is to create enough education and income-generating opportunities to capitalize on this achievement before economic reality reverses the gains and convinces those concerned that they have little choice but to migrate in spite of the dangers. Having highlighted the dangers and created the demand, the project now has the opportunity to help communities develop alternatives to migration. If USDOL and the project team are ready to take this on board, the remaining months of the project can be an exciting period of experimentation both for the communities concerned and USDOL, rather than simply a gradual running down of existing activities.

### **5.5.3 Recommendations**

- The project needs to experiment with strategies to facilitate community proposed and managed initiatives to encourage young people to stay in their villages. Such initiatives need to include income-generating activities, which can be enhanced by the provision of opportunities to become literate and learn basic life skills. Income generation should not be seen as an alternative to nonformal education, but developed to complement and run concurrently with nonformal education programs. For example, gardening is likely to be more successful if the actors have the capacity to calculate their capital requirements, running costs, and profits. Gardening can be enhanced by the use of natural fertilizers and other techniques that can be introduced in nonformal education programs. Nonformal education becomes adapted and relevant to life in the community if it takes such aspects into account and supports their practical application. While not part of the current project agreement, this would be an extremely valuable step toward preventing migration among the most vulnerable group of young people, thereby increasing the sustainability of project impact and contributing to the design of future projects.
- The project should talk to the Stromme Foundation and their national NGO partners to find out about their initiative to develop accelerated education and transition to formal education for children who have passed the age of school enrollment. The Stromme Foundation is a Norwegian NGO with its West African office in Bamako.

- The project should investigate the possibility of transferring the coordination of Village Watch groups (*Comités de Surveillance Villageois*) to Commune Councils before the end of the project. Consultation with national and regional ministry offices to make sure that Village Watch groups are informed of national strategy for their support would also be useful.

## VI LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

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“We have a question box that we hang in the school yard during the week and anyone can post their questions. Our school Children’s Rights Committee has representatives from each year group, and they open the box when they meet and discuss the questions and look for the answers. It’s a good way for children to get the information they need without having to identify themselves.”

*Head teacher Terehi (Mopti region)*

### ***Involving children and young people***

An outstanding feature of this project is the degree to which it has succeeded in involving children and young people as actors in their own and their community’s development. The particular activities that the project has initiated include the bi-annual youth camps held in each commune and the visit to Bamako by 300 children. The strategies using child-to-child communication supported by theatre, video, and radio have also been highly effective. Considering the demographic structure of African countries, it is particularly important to recognize and develop strategies that succeed in engaging young people.

### ***Making communities responsible***

The long-term success of the project depends on communities taking responsibility for the safety and education of their children. Project strategies to create and strengthen CSOs and engage local leaders have helped to enable this to happen. Advocacy training has strengthened the local democratic process and the capacity of local people and organizations to approach education authorities and commune councils to discuss their concerns.

### ***Subcontracting to National NGOs***

Ultimately, it is local NGOs that accompany the communities where they work in the long-term development process. The local knowledge and integration of these organizations makes them the best placed to fulfill this role. The project is an example of good practice and successful partnership in this respect.

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## VII STAKEHOLDERS MEETING

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The final phase of the evaluation, the stakeholders meeting, enabled the lead evaluator to present and discuss the broad findings with a representative group of those involved in project implementation, alongside some independent resource people. The presentation led to an animated discussion, focusing principally on the clarification of certain points both for the evaluator and between participants. The presentation raised the following four points for ongoing reflection among stakeholders:

- Is there a degree of ambiguity in the role of the Hometown Associations?
- How can the *medersa* schools be more involved in project activities?
- How can transition from nonformal to formal education be developed?
- The question of Koranic schools.

While time did not permit much in-depth discussion of these issues, participants acknowledged the validity of the questions, while also accepting that one project cannot tackle everything, however much it might want to. The Hometown Association representatives did not think that there was any degree of ambiguity in their role and expressed their conviction that they were working entirely to protect the interests of young people from their communities who were living in Bamako. Members of the project team understood the concern but felt, as does the evaluator, that while the current role of these associations could be improved if they put more emphasis on preventing migration or encouraging young people to return home rather than finding them employment as domestic servants, the reality is that there are not as yet enough viable alternatives to make this realistic and young people in Bamako are better protected if they are in contact with their Home Town Association than if they are not.

The second part of the meeting enabled groups of different stakeholders to put forward their suggestions and recommendations for the future of the project. The four groups were made up of people from (1) Care and World Vision, (2) National NGOs, (3) the Ministry of Education, and (4) the Ministry of Women, Children and the Family and Hometown Associations. The group discussions focused on three principal issues, with the following responses:

- *How to encourage young people out of school to stay in their communities*  
With regard to this issue, all four groups agreed on the need to develop and support more nonformal education opportunities such as the innovative CEDs of the DEGE initiative, CDVs, and literacy services. The importance of having an appropriate curriculum was emphasized, so that young graduates can reinforce capacity within the commune where there are rarely enough people with basic education to meet the demand for literate workers in local administration and health and education service delivery, and to coordinate activities with partners in village development initiatives.

The groups were unanimous about the need for income-generating activities at the village level, both to involve young people in meaningful activities and to strengthen the local

economy. One group specifically mentioned soap making, gardening, meat production, and local trading as possible activities, while others proposed a study to identify both new and familiar activities adapted to the regions concerned. Strategies for linking nonformal education with subsequent or simultaneous income-generating activities were also discussed. Here literacy, accounting, and management training were seen as important, alongside vocational training adapted to the particular activity concerned. Developing local cultural and sporting activities were also identified as important elements, both in making village life more attractive for young people and contributing to their personal development.

- *Strategies for supporting the reintegration of children returning to their communities*  
Groups saw a direct link between this and the first issue. If there were more opportunities at the village level, the reintegration of returning children would automatically become easier. It was also suggested that the identification of other financial and technical actors developing services and activities in the project zones would enable greater synergy.
- *Developing the transition from formal to nonformal education*  
Group suggestions covered lobbying the Ministry of Education and negotiation to develop the transition on a national institutionalized basis. The education group stressed the importance of harmonizing the curricula in formal and nonformal structures to facilitate the transition. In the meantime, advocacy on a local case-by-case basis can help to emphasize the need. The experience of certain national NGOs who have succeeded in this in other areas of the country was mentioned, as well as the initiative of the Stromme Foundation and its partners who have developed an accelerated curriculum leading to transfer to the formal system.

During the meeting, stakeholders expressed general agreement with the broad findings of the evaluation. Their suggestions supported and contributed to the resulting recommendations.